

The *Negative Journal* is Calling for Papers for its third issue, co-edited by Dr Julie Reshe (editor-in-chief) and Dr Aaron Aquilina (guest editor). This is a general call for papers that also invites a special cluster on queer negativity.

Call for Papers: General Issue

There are many names for negativity: pessimism, nihilism, antinatalism, misanthropy, cynicism... sometimes absurdism, solipsism, or even mysticism, in certain senses. Some academic pursuit that teases out unique nuances among these terms would be — as are all pursuits — worthless. But expanding and conjoining these terms with more common parlance (depression, apathy, disappointment, suffering, meaninglessness) allows us, at bare minimum, to sketch our existence in a manner that makes legible and listens to these negative experiences rather than seeking to extinguish them through the fictions of therapy, companionship, hope, or love.

This is not about being suicidal, at least not wholly. In the words of E.M. Cioran, '[w]e do not rush toward death, we flee the catastrophe of birth, [...] source of every infirmity, every disaster' (*The Trouble with Being Born*). That place of non-being preceding our existence continues to haunt us throughout life, if we are unhappy enough to be attuned to it. Life is revealed, then, as 'death lived in postponement', and the void within makes of us the living dead, the being-not-being (Aaron Aquilina, *The Ontology of Death*). With these last remarks, and despite the proliferation of negativity's designations, one can quickly see how language begins to falter and fall into incomprehensibility; and perhaps not having the words for negativity is the most articulate anyone can be.

Our horrified muteness is not merely some contemporary resignation in the face of 'global climate change, natural disasters, the energy crisis, and the progressive extinction of species world-wide' (Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet*). Suffering has always been here, whether it is our own human condition or the pelicans' choking on plastic bottle caps. Depression, taken as a mode of (non-)being rather than reduced to a treatable illness, thus 'becomes a mode of knowing, a way of perceiving, of being touched and wounded by the world's wounds' (Julie Reshe, *Negative Essays*). This more-than-individual suffering only continues to manifest the negativity that thought acknowledges as its burden, arguably realised continually throughout history (Seneca and P.W. Zapffe come to mind).

In light of this, the *Negative Journal* calls for papers that address negativity rather than pave the way for some illusory emancipation. Contributions might extend the thought of philosophical pessimists, inhabit the despair evident in literature and art, explore modes of non-being and un-becoming, or locate negativity in apophatic spaces beyond philosophy, psychoanalysis, and language. Work that interrogates negativity's limits, exclusions, political uses, and uneven distribution—as in Afro-pessimism or as per J. Logan Smilges's *Crip Negativity*—is equally welcome. The *Negative Journal* aims to provide a locus for these discussions, which are all too often deemed unspeakable.

Special Cluster – Queer Negativity

Additionally, this issue of the *Negative Journal* invites contributions towards a special cluster on queer negativity.

The association of queerness with the death drive—that core negativity—is by now well established. Thinking through the consequences of this association in tandem with *BAEDAN*'s anonymous editors, we come to realise that 'queer negativity [...]' means nothing less than the destruction of the civilized

world' and its quiescent citizens. Queerness is figured, here, as a deadly anti-politics of the social and psychic alike, a void at the heart of it all.

This act of connective thinking, however, is far from complete; indeed, it is even more urgent while late capitalism's assimilationist politics squeeze us harder than ever until we fit into 'intelligibility's mandate and the correlative economy that regulates what is "legitimate and recognizable"' (Lee Edelman, *No Future*). Queers are encouraged to ally with the proponents of life on pain of perishing. The vigilant questions at the heart of this special cluster, then, are as follows: *what constitutes the intersections of living queer and living death? How do queerness and negativity collude outside the domain of neoliberal homonormativity and its optimistically organised selves?*

One way would be to foreground the irruptions of various modes of death, rendering superfluous any attempt at positivist meaning-making out of queer subjectivity (to some extent or other, thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Jeffrey Weeks and José Esteban Muñoz are proponents of this). That is, understanding how one can *not* participate in the warm embrace of 'the cult of difference' (Leo Bersani, 'Is there a Gay Art?'). And with figuring death's thwarting of "meaning" and "progress", of "community" and "generations" and "futures", come inquiries of the temporal privileges denied to those who insist on emptiness, unfixability, and death in the *now* not *later*. The positive time of social order can so easily be read as "straight time", after all (cf. Elizabeth Freeman, J. Halberstam, and others).

Standing aside from the space of the *polis* and the time of life, what remains? Queer inchoate subjects, inarticulate and traumatised by life, humiliated and always-othered (...but somehow, always there...). Maladapted monsters, really: at best defined by mutations and gendered chimerism, at worst by viruses and the failure to participate in some grand narrative of reproductive evolution. These broken figures may be glimpsed in the history or the arts: what of them? What kind of pessimistic queerness, living through all sorts of deaths, can be read in novels, films, and other art forms in ways that are congruent with shoring up one's despair at life? But instead, perhaps, one should just laugh, for that is another way of fundamentally pulling the rug out from under those who deny life's disaster.

Whether we shake with mirth or sobs, queerness no more pushes us towards desiring annihilation than acknowledges death's constant unworking of the self and its bonds. And speaking of desire: when considering selfhood against those charlatans that promise to fill the void, how is the scale that weighs sex and relations of un/knowning tipped one way or the other (cf. Oliver Davis & Tim Dean)? Too often for comfort, '[t]ransgressing limits [of sexuality] is to do with a vague notion of inclusiveness rather than active contravention', an affirmation rather than negation (Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*). How, then, to wilfully pervert not just sexual practices but the tyrannical myth of happiness, which seeks to suffocate both negativity and queerness?

In the end, more questions quibble in the corner: is queerness merely a layer on top of being that is always suffering? Or is it the case that, if queerness is another modulation of pessimist negativity, it is queerness itself that hurts?

Submission

Abstracts of no longer than **300** words (along with brief biographical notes) should be sent to julie.reshe@gmail.com and aaron.aquilina@um.edu.mt by **15th January, 2027**. Submission emails

should be headed by 'Negative Journal Issue 3 Submission' or 'Negative Journal Issue 3 – Queer Negativity'.

Accepted papers extending the thoughts of this Call should be no longer than **4000** words, and less conventional and/or creative-critical forms are encouraged. Full pieces will be expected no later than by **1st June, 2027**.

For those seeking consideration for the queer negativity cluster, topics can include but are not limited to:

- Queer negativity and/at the limits of psychoanalysis;
- Depressing readings: queer literature, queer art more generally;
- Queer hauntings, queer horror: wolf-men and chimeras hiding in the closet;
- Queerness as posthuman, proto-human, less-than-human;
- Failure, laziness, futility, hollowness, apathy, asexuality, refusal;
- Negational laughter: camp, drag, gallows humour, absurdism, and queer irony;
- Impossibilities: the language/silence of queerness;
- Anti-social projects: queerness, anti-politics, anarchy;
- Queer pessimism: queerness and Arthur Schopenhauer, Emil Cioran, P.W. Zapffe, Eugene Thacker, Philipp Mainländer, and similar;
- Trans* identities and negative subjectivity;
- Queering science: apoptosis, entropy, decay, extinction, and destructive plasticity;
- Queerness and forms of death (suicide, retirement, illness, madness, etc.);
- The negative heart of queer sex and desire;
- Temporality and queer negativity; chrononegativity;
- Queerness as anti-natalist in several ways;
- Play as negative queer modality;
- Queer responses: saying *no* to queer theory and queer theorists.

Note: Work selected for the queer negativity cluster could potentially also be considered for a future edited volume with Negative Press (<https://www.negativepress.ie/>).